

I had a conversation with a woman five years ago, just after arriving in the Netherlands, in which she told me that the country had a way of sucking you in. I laughed it off, knowing my plan was only to stay for 18 months.

Life has caused me to adjust that expectation from time to time, setting a new milestone for when it would be time to move on to another place. First it was, after I got back on my feet after my divorce. Then when I was ready to move on from my job. Even as I mailed my application for permanent residency a few weeks ago, I reminded myself it wasn't really a commitment to staying long term but a way of reducing the amount of paperwork and fees for the remaining years that I would be here.

A few months ago, I started dating a Dutch guy, an tribulation I'd avoided until now. As it became clear to me this was a relationship worth pursuing, I began to wonder about my commitment to the lowlands as well. I no longer had a clear milestone one which I could attach my anticipated decision to leave.

Even though I've moved the goalposts over and over to accommodate, I still haven't completely accepted the notion that the Netherlands may be my home forever. It's amazing how such an internal shift can cause such external discombobulation.

The first year I lived in the Netherlands I had a year long mobile phone contract. Once it was finished, I switched to a month-to-month plan. One less thing to have to worry about when I moved, I figured. Last week, the new phone I'd ordered turned up in the mail and that required a trip to T-Mobile. The guy working there looked at my month-to-month contract and suggested that I could sign a year contract and save some money on the bill. I've integrated sufficiently enough that saving money was too tempting, so I signed a contract.

For a year, anyway.